

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life, service and sacrifice of General Vang Pao, who passed away yesterday evening in Clovis, California. General Vang Pao was a historic Hmong military leader who led his people against communist forces during a turbulent time in Laos from 1961 to 1975. In this country, General Vang Pao served as a civilian leader who continued to lead the Hmong-American community for nearly four decades.

My heart-felt sympathy goes out to General Vang Pao's family and to all the Hmong- American families in Minnesota and across the U.S. Over the years, I had the honor of joining General Vang Pao at many events such as: the Hmong American New Year celebrations and the July Soccer Festival celebrations in St. Paul, as he had always come to the Twin Cities to join the Hmong community for those events. Most recently, I had the great honor of joining him for the grand opening celebrations of the Hmong Village Center on the Eastside of St. Paul on October 30, 2010. Although frail from his failing health and sitting in his chair, the General was in good spirit and spoke eloquently to a large gathering crowd at the celebrations. Sadly, this was the last time I saw him.

General Vang Pao's influence has touched the Hmong-American community deeply, and I know the community will continue to share and cherish the memories of his legacy for future generations to come. In honor of Gen. Vang Pao's lifetime of service to his people and loyalty to the U.S., I am pleased to submit this statement for the Congressional Record.